



[Ngugi wa Thiong'o](#)

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Ngugi the Academic

Ngugi's (**attached**) essay "The Writer in a Neo-colonial State", first published in 1986 in a publication called "The Black Scholar", and subsequently as part of the 1993 book "Moving the Centre", helps this project of ours considerably.

Ngugi taught at Nairobi University and later in the USA. Therefore as much as he is a novelist, he has also been an academic.

In this essay Ngugi takes a long look back over the period from the end of the Second World War, and divides it roughly into three - the fifties, the sixties, and the seventies; liberation struggle; victory and independence; and neo-colonialist reaction. He considers the way that the literature affected these passages of history, and was affected by them.

We have not used such a scheme, nor did we start with the Second World War, but Ngugi's overview does correspond with our series to an extent. Clearly, in nearly all the countries of Africa, neo-colonialism has taken hold, and maintained its grip. Ngugi problematised this in his way, and so have we, in our way.

In 2011, a quarter of a century after Ngugi's essay was written, an African country – Libya – was attacked by the imperialists with full-scale military force, bombed, shelled, rocketed and invaded. Libya was the first country in Africa to become independent after the world wars, and it was the only one to have achieved parity, in its general standard of living, with the European countries on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea from Africa.

Now Libya is being catastrophically underdeveloped. Neo-colonialism is still with us, but now armed, brutal, direct, naked colonialism is back, as well.

There is an immense amount of wisdom in Ngugi's essay. Do, please, read it.

Ngugi concludes: “as the struggle continues and intensifies, the lot of the writer in a neo-colonial state will become harder and not easier.”

This is our lot. For as much as heroes have gone before, and for as much as the written record is priceless and indispensable, yet we who remain will have to do it all again, and in conditions of even greater difficulty. We have no right to expect less, or to expect less of ourselves.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Ngugi wa Thiong’o, The Writer in a Neo-colonial State, 1993.](#)
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